



Proposal for Salzburger Vorstadt 15
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Introduction

Cultural heritage includes the history and memories, the stories and traditions of a people and their place of belonging. Historic buildings, large and small, hold symbolic significance. Notable buildings become landmarks within a town. Salzburger Vorstadt 15 is such a building. How buildings and communities undergo a cultural transformation, one that embodies a new message about the past, is of great consequence. Site transformation of a historic structure dominating a town's public image, inevitably involves an educational journey. Events leading up to cultural

change become opportune moments for collective self-reflection. Such “teachable moments” become valuable tools in elevating a town’s understanding of its past in relation to the values and principles of social responsibility moving forward.

In recent weeks, these changes have been concretized. Once existing as merely an idea about change, the plan to repurpose Hitler’s birthplace as police headquarters “a place where democracy and human rights are defended” is now underway, setting the stage for the townspeople of Braunau am Inn to begin a new phase of development anchored in concepts of peace and freedom.



A redesign plan by the firm Marte Marte for Hitler's birthplace.

news.artnet.com

How the transition will actually occur, is still under consideration. Will a new façade conceal an old history or will the physical transformation of the building be augmented to capture the long and arduous process of interpersonal and cultural transformation?

The two proposals that follow were first developed in 2017, when the future of the house was still under deliberation. I have updated the proposals to respond to the new moment. I anticipate there will be exhibitions, films and books to document the various steps of turning Hitler’s birthplace into a civically-minded meeting place. My proposals focus on two additional ideas: first, how to create a visual cue on the façade that succinctly references and rejects the history of

the building; and second, how to maximize the physical transformation of the building to provide a unique opportunity for witnessing change.

Proposal One



Salzburger Vorstadt 15 (n.d.) Photo Source: Archives from Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance

The first proposal features a simple, straight forward building inscription, that would carry historic meaning and context. Franz Jägerstätter was born on May 20, 1907 in [Sankt Radegund, Upper Austria](#), a small village between [Salzburg](#) and [Braunau am Inn](#). During World War II, he became an Austrian conscientious objector, refusing to fight in what he believed was an unjust war. Different from other conscientious objectors at the time, his reasoning was not based on an affiliation with a particular group, but rather, on his own volition to seek justice within his country and on a global scale. He was imprisoned in Germany on February 23, 1943 for refusing to take the Hitler oath, and was executed in Berlin by guillotine on August 9, 1943.

On June 2007, Pope Benedict XVI declared Jägerstätter a martyr. He was beatified in a ceremony held by Cardinal José Saraiva Martins at the New Cathedral in Linz on October 26, 2007.

Numerous biographies and a recent film portray Jägerstätter as an avid writer. There would be many quotes to choose from, but a short list would include the following:

I cannot and may not take an oath in favor of a government that is fighting an unjust war.

Now I'll write down a few words as they come to me from my heart. Although I am writing them with my hands in chains, this is still much better than if it were my will in chains.

For what purpose did God create all human beings with intelligence and free will if it is not our place – as many are now saying – to decide whether this war, which Germany is conducting, is just or unjust?

A thoughtful inscription placed on the facade of a building may appear as a small detail, but its impact is great. Jägerstätter's total rejection of Nazism is eloquently captured in his writings. Celebrating the power of an individual voice to stand up against tyranny in favor of justice and dignity for all on the façade of the new police headquarters, becomes the most powerful antidote to Hitler's legacies of hate and destruction. Selecting the most appropriate quote to serve as a building inscription would be the work of a committee, comprised of historians, townspeople and city officials.

Proposal Two



“Townpeople of Braunau am Inn saluting”

Photo Source: Archives of Braunau am Inn

In 2016, I began working with Mag. Florian Kotanko, Chairman for the Association for Contemporary History at Braunau am Inn. Together we assembled a collection of archival photos about the town's history, between 1938-1945. I used photoshop to experiment building a series of images that would be projected onto Hitler's birthplace, as the building was about to undergo changes in ownership. At the time, discussion included destroying the building to loosen Hitler's grip on this small town. This plan was quickly abandoned as an inadequate solution.



US soldiers inside Hitler's birthplace (1945)

Photo source: Arch Daily Online

In 2020, plans for Salzburger Vorstadt 15 were achieved. Using the city's archives, my



Geburtshaus October 13, 2013 <http://braunau-history.at/w/index.php?title=Datei:Tafel.jpg&oldid=1846>

proposal focuses on staging a media presentation of the history of Braunau am Inn at the site, narrating the slow process of transformation from 1938 to the present. The presentation would be curated by a committee of historians, artists, townspeople and public officials. Photos from private collections would also be solicited to depict specific events, that may live outside of the



Gebursthau under National Socialism

Photo Sources: House of Responsibility – Braunau am Inn

public record. Active story-telling would enliven the overall process of remembrance and fuel the excitement of witnessing images move across the building's façade. The project would symbolically mark the moment when the past is dismantled to make way for the future. Unlike my earlier proposal, the narrative does not end in 1945, rather, it begins in 1945.

Karen Frostig, Ph.D., is an interdisciplinary public memory artist, writer and Associate Professor at Lesley University's Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences and the College of Art and Design, and a Resident Scholar at Brandeis University's Women's Studies Research Center. Karen is the Director of the Lock(er) of Memory Memorial to the victims of the Jungfernhof concentration camp, where her grandparents were murdered. She directed The Vienna Project (2013-2014), the first naming memorial in Vienna to memorialize seven victim groups murdered under National Socialism. Both memorial projects combine innovation with historic rigor, and represent a multi-media, interactive approach to memorialization. Karen holds dual citizenship in the Republic of Austria and the United States.